

Good Evening,  
Senator Harp, Representative John Geragosian & Members of the Appropriations  
Committee

My name is Pauline Bouffard and I am Director of Employment Services at the Arc of Meriden-Wallingford, Inc. and I am here to speak about the DDS attendance based reimbursement to Private Service Providers funding system.

I would like to start off by thanking all of you and the legislators who are not here for all your hard work during this tough fiscal time and especially for not cutting our services..

The Arc of Meriden-Wallingford, Inc. has provided quality services for individuals with developmental disabilities since 1952. Throughout the past 58 years there have been many challenges. However, I must say, no challenge as worrisome as the past year with the development of the attendance-based system.

We provide services for individuals in Day Programs, Employment Programs, and Residential Settings. Some of the individuals we provide services for are very medically fragile, elderly ("they tell me I hate that snow and ice") or **they** have a dual diagnosis of developmental disability and mental health conditions. Should the Agency be penalized for providing services for them? NO. Should the most vulnerable people receive less care or support? NO. We should never let critical direct care services go in a direction that compromises the safety of the individuals we serve.

I understand the fiscal bind the State of Connecticut is in and certainly appreciate the difficult challenge the legislators are faced with; "No one can please everyone".

However, I have to ask, how can we maintain the required infrastructure of staff when our budget allocations will be reduced due to lack of attendance when we are not being funded for the full rate? We are already hiring per diem staff to be on call instead of hiring full time staff for open positions. Imagine how you would feel if you were a per diem staff for a non profit agency and got the call that stated "due to low attendance today we will not need you". How long would you want to work there? Do school systems send teachers home? Does a day care charge you less if your child is home sick? I do not think so.

Whether the individuals we are here to provide services for come in or not, we are open, our Philosophy is to do our job and provide the best possible service everyday.

Please support Betsy Ritter and Jonathon Harris' request to DDS Commissioner O'Meara to place the attendance-based policy on hold and let the rate study committee complete its work as planned to assure the states safety net remains in tact.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak tonight.

*Pauline Bouffard*